

ISP School Sittingbourne

Independent special school inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Jill Bainton

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A¹ of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005², the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

ISP School Sittingbourne opened in Kent in 1993 and is one of two small independent special day schools owned and run by their parent company, Integrated Services Programme (ISP), which cares for and educates young people looked after by local authorities across England. The other school is ISP School Teynham on a site five miles away. The great majority of students live in ISP foster homes. They are aged between 11 and 16 and have severe behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, and many have additional specific learning and/or psychiatric difficulties. Most have been excluded from their previous mainstream schools and many have had irregular attendance and have become disaffected by education. At the time of the inspection, there were 14 students on roll, all but one of whom had a statement of special educational needs. Students' attainment on entry is generally below that expected for their age and the great majority have particular difficulties with social communication and basic skills. The students at both the Sittingbourne site and the Teynham site share the facilities and teaching. ISP has an educational outreach service, providing support to schools in meeting the needs of their looked after students. The school was last inspected in 2007 and met all the regulations for registration at that time.

Evaluation of the school

ISP School Sittingbourne provides a good quality of education. It successfully nurtures and motivates students who have a wide range of complex emotional and behavioural needs and re-engages them in learning. As a result of a good curriculum, good teaching and effective support by the whole multi-disciplinary team, the students make good progress. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school's procedures to safeguard the students and its arrangements for their welfare, health and safety are good. The school continues to meet all of the regulations for registration.

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

Quality of education

The quality of education is good. The school implements effectively a good, well-devised curriculum, which is directly relevant to the students' needs. An outstanding feature is the involvement of a range of therapists, especially speech and language therapists, who focus on developing the students' fundamental skills in order for them to be able to fully access the curriculum. Students study most National Curriculum subjects and have their attainments accredited through GCSE examinations and the Awards Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN). The school has adopted the personalised learning targets (PELTS). Students, all of whom have learning difficulties, are given the opportunity to progress and develop well. The effective use of therapies is fully integrated within the curriculum, and includes speech and language, art, play, cognitive behaviour and anger management therapies. The speech and language therapists are in classes daily. This is invaluable in helping students to learn and understand specialist vocabulary, for example in science. These therapists expertly lead speech and communication lessons, which help develop students' thinking and spoken language skills. Students' music, drama and instrument lessons culminate in the annual performing arts week, with 'Joseph' being enthusiastically rehearsed during the inspection by both staff and students, in preparation for performance to an invited audience. The school has expanded its information and communication technology provision, which is now taught to GCSE level and is used effectively across the curriculum. Vocational studies have further developed at the Teynham site, with rural studies, food technology and home economics focusing on childcare, metalwork and motor mechanics studies.

The majority of students have a statement of special educational needs. The school has a dedicated special educational needs team which provides very effective and focused support to address the specific needs of the students' statements.

Students have careers advice through regular contact with the Connexions service. They have work placements planned through the Education Business Partnership during the next year. Students are prepared well for the experiences and responsibilities of adult life through a highly effective programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE), which is fully integrated within the life of the school.

The school's enhanced curriculum includes a residential experience. The outdoor facilities at Teynham provide extensive opportunities for a range of physical activities. There is an after-school club in motor mechanics and special evenings are held as rewards for students' positive achievement and involvement in class. Curriculum-related visits include those to nature reserves, London theatres and museums, and an annual visit to Parliament.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good. Teaching is consistently good and the assessment of students' progress is outstanding and, as a result, students make

good progress in relation to their starting points. An outstanding feature in all lessons is the very positive personal relationships between the staff and students. Most lessons proceed at an orderly pace, with the majority of students concentrating, on task and behaving well. There is a relaxed yet purposeful atmosphere in lessons, which are planned well to meet the individual needs of the students. The high ratio of staff to students ensures that the students are given very good individual support. Most students come with communication difficulties, which have generally not been addressed previously. Staff are adept at re-engaging students after periods of non-attendance, interesting them in the subject and encouraging them to take an active role in their own learning. Every care has been taken to provide each student with an opportunity to find something at which they can excel, whether it is taking a singing role in the musical, conducting a controlled explosion in the science laboratory or getting their hands dirty taking a car engine apart. Students have work well matched to their needs, which is based on an excellent understanding and identification of such needs. They say that they want to be at school and that they are getting better at their work. Students are motivated by points for behaviour and attainment during lessons. The support staff all give very good help to students and help them focus, explaining the task helpfully if they do not understand.

The outstanding assessment procedures are methodical and systematic. The special educational needs team devises a provision map for each student based on his or her specific needs. This encompasses all aspects of the individual student's personalised learning programme and is very detailed, giving a clear picture of the provision in place to support the student, including learning and therapeutic support. At the end of each term, records of achievement are very detailed, covering all the subjects studied, and giving clear areas for future development. These are shared with all interested parties. In addition, the students' National Curriculum levels are included in review reports.

Students make good progress in relation to their starting points, which in many cases were very low. Such progress is not just measured in academic progress but in their personal development. The vast majority of students go on to further education and leave the school with GCSEs in a range of subjects. All students leave with some nationally accredited awards, including ASDAN and awards for adult numeracy and literacy. The school has identified in its self-evaluation that review procedures will in future involve all interested parties, including parents and carers, to provide more informed strategic planning for improved outcomes for the students.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students is outstanding. The most outstanding feature is the contribution that the school and ISP Services make to the personal development of each student. Each has a care plan, with dedicated professionals supporting their individual needs, both educationally and socially. These include therapists, teaching and support staff, social workers and foster carers, who are trained by ISP to support the young people in their care.

Relationships are very positive at all levels, with experienced, committed staff in all disciplines working together for the benefit of the students. Behaviour support throughout the school is very successful and the students' behaviour is good. One of the older students commented that staff help him to manage his behaviour, which has improved considerably and he can now work in class without direct supervision. Staff are flexible, work patiently with the students and respond to their challenging behaviour in a positive, proactive way, defusing difficult situations and giving students the support to move forward and learn from such experiences. Students say that they like being at the school; their attendance is good and one wrote in the questionnaire 'for an EBD school the behaviour is good.' The school is a harmonious community with everyone working together for their mutual benefit. Students are encouraged to self-regulate, take responsibility for their actions and make well-informed decisions. They are guided very well by staff who are very positive role models and treat students with respect. The consistent and clear structure of activities helps to promote students' sense of self-worth, awareness of others and their understanding of right and wrong. The school council has given students a voice and the suggestions they have made have been acted upon. Students are given time for reflection over a range of subjects during regular assemblies and, combined with the creative and aesthetic curriculum, this provides opportunities for spiritual awareness. The staff and student cultural mix helps them to appreciate other cultures and traditions, which helps to promote racial harmony. The thematic activity evenings include celebrations of cultural diversity. Students initiate and take part in charity and fund-raising activities. Their basic skills, including their personal skills, together with their awareness of local and national public services and institutions from lessons and visits, prepare them well for their future lives and economic well-being.

Welfare, health and safety of the students

The school makes good provision to ensure the welfare, health and safety of the students. Its policies for welfare, health and safety, which include anti-bullying, health and safety on visits outside school and behaviour, based on a therapeutic approach to behaviour management, are implemented effectively. There are good systems in place to ensure that safeguarding is up to date and all staff have had child protection training. Child protection procedures are detailed and cover the protection of students from harm, and what to do if allegations are made against staff. There are good procedures for identifying personal risk in relation to students with severe behavioural problems. Students report that staff are good at dealing swiftly and effectively with any instances of bullying. Students are encouraged to stay safe, take regular planned exercise and to eat healthily, which the school feel is an area they could improve. Students are very well supervised throughout the day. There are robust arrangements for fire prevention, fire risk assessment, the monitoring of fire equipment, fire drills and training in operating fire safety equipment. First aid procedures are clearly outlined, a number of staff are trained in first aid and all accidents are recorded. The attendance and admission registers are kept according to the regulations. The school fulfils its duties with regard to the

Disability Discrimination Act 2002 and has drawn up a three-year accessibility plan. The school has identified in its self-evaluation the intention to review procedures to further improve all aspects of welfare, health and safety, including new initiatives to promote healthy eating.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has checked the suitability of all staff, including the proprietors, to work with children and its rigorous appointment procedures ensure the safeguarding of students further. The information is held on the single central register of staff appointments as required.

School's premises and accommodation

The premises and accommodation are suitable, well maintained and enable students to learn effectively and safely. There are sufficient, adequately sized and well-presented classrooms for a range of lessons and practical subjects, including art, design and technology and science, and a large hall. The high quality facilities at the Teynham site are used effectively.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

Parents, carers and others are provided with a good range of information through the prospectus, regular ISP newsletters and the website. They are kept well informed about students' progress through regular meetings and reports. Placing authorities comment favourably on the quality and flow of information.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a set of procedures which meets the regulations.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended ('the Regulations').

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- review all policies and procedures for students' welfare, health and safety, including the promotion of healthy eating
- implement the planned review procedures to involve all interested parties, including parents and carers, in the provision of more informed strategic planning for improved outcomes for the students.

Inspection judgement recording form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of students		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of students' needs		✓		
How well students make progress in their learning		✓		

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of students		✓		

Welfare, health and safety of students

The overall welfare, health and safety of students		✓		
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School details

Name of school	ISP Sittingbourne School		
DCSF number	886/6065		
Unique reference number (URN)	119015		
Type of school	Special day school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1998		
Age range of students	11–16		
Gender of students	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time students)	Boys: 12	Girls: 2	Total: 14
Number of students with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 11	Girls: 2	Total: 13
Number of students who are looked after	Boys: 12	Girls: 2	Total: 14
Annual fees (day students)	£28,880		
Address of school	Church Street Sittingbourne Kent ME10 3EG		
Telephone number	01795 422044		
Fax number	01795 477088		
Email address	sittingbourne.school@ispchildcare.org.uk		
Headteacher	Craig Walter		
Proprietor	Integrated Services Programme		
Reporting inspector	Jill Bainton		
Dates of inspection	24–25 March 2010		